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ABSTRACT

As preventative and remediative activities in the human services are impacted by reduced funding, the worth of such activities is increasingly questioned. A metropolitan school district School Social Work Department recently initiated an evaluability assessment to focus on an extensive process in which social work staff and school administrators defined program goals and objectives and the measures with which to evaluate their attainment. The first section, Context of the Assessment, describes how the request for an evaluation led into an evaluability assessment. The program model, developed to depict the desired outcome of social work services. is presented in the second section; the third section deals with special education. Section 4 lists evaluation options, and priorities for study are described in Section 5. Numerous tables and figures are provided to illustrate the evaluation study procedures. (JAC)

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SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT

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INTRODUCTION

As preventative and remediative activities in the human service field are impacted by a reprioritizing of federal initiatives and a reduction of funding sources, the worth of such activities is increasingly called into question. One of the areas effected by this closer scrutiny is mental health services for children in the public sector. Within the last three years one of the largest groups of service providers in this field, social workers in the public schools, have demonstrated increased professional awareness of the need for evaluation to determine program effectiveness and future direction.

In one metropolitan school district serving 30,000 students, the School Social Work Department, in cooperation with the Department of Planning and Evaluation, recently initiated an evaluability assessment program in anticipation of the need for greater accountability. In the 38 years of the department's existence, only one attempt had been made at program evaluation. That particular study, completed in 1970, dealt with consumer satisfaction with school social work services.

The present study focused on an extensive process in which social work staff and school administrators were involved in defining program goals and objectives and the measures with which to evaluate their attainment.

Evaluability assessment is a process that attempts to increase the utility of evaluations by ensuring that the following three standards are met:

- Program objectives are well-defined, i.e., those in charge of the program have defined program objectives in terms of specific measures of program performance, and data on those measures are obtainable at reasonable cost.

- Program assumptions/objectives are plausible, i.e., there is evidence that program activities have some likelihood of causing progress toward program objectives.

- Intended uses of evaluation information are well-defined, i.e., those in charge of the program have defined the intended uses of evaluation information.

(Wholey, 1979; p.17)

Evaluability assessment delineates a set of evaluation options and assesses the cost-effectiveness of the options relative to the information needs of decision makers. The judgements made in evaluability assessment result from thorough execution of processes which are ubiquitous strategies in planning any evaluation, viz., review of written documents that describe program purposes, discussions with different levels of management, and site visits to observe the program in practice. These activities clarify the program's goal structure; in Wholey's terms, the activities define management's intentions for the program and the program "reality." In any program, discrepancies exist between the planned activities and the actual events and programs may operate toward objectives which are discrepant from formal, stated objectives. Evaluability assessment articulates program objectives in a manner which highlights the assumed causal links between program activities and desired outcomes. Discrepancies and logical inconsistencies are brought to light before formal evaluation data collection begins rather than ex post facto. This knowledge obviously provides a necessary base for evaluation. But, the generation of this knowledge is also a worthy endeavor for its own sake insofar as it increases understanding of program functioning. Such was the case in the assessment herein reported.

The first section, Context of the Assessment describes how the request for an evaluation led into a evaluability assessment. This section includes the first product of the evaluability assessment, the Program Description. This document describes the range of activities performed by school social workers. It reflects in its scope the professional orientation of the social workers as it synthesizes under principles stated by the National Association of School Social Workers, the myriad of functions performed by school social workers. The activities were extracted through brainstorming sessions and followed by discussions to refine and categorize the descriptors. Six categories of activities were defined: assessment, direct service, consultation, liaison, administrative duties, and professional growth activities.

The second section of the paper presents the Program Model which was developed to depict the desired outcomes of social work services. A separate model was produced for each of the six activity categories. During the discussions of outcomes, it became evident that different levels of goal orientation occur among the social workers themselves. Distinctions between immediate outcomes and program objectives, viz., the shift from social worker to client, were not readily apparent and some social workers had difficulty decentering from their own perspective to articulate the client changes that could logically be expected from their interventions. In fact, clarification of such distinctions was a most beneficial attribute of the exercise since the process generalizes to the requirements for writing Individualized Educational Plans (I.E.P.).

Since school social workers operate primarily within the mandates of special education legislation, the Special Education process was also charted. This process is presented in Section Three.

Section Four lists the evaluation options which resulted from the discussions of School Social work functions. The options were reviewed by staff social workers and administrators. Their priorities for study are described in Section Five. These priorities were used to plan an intensive or summative evaluation which would associate social worker units of service with student outcomes.

Several factors have come into play this year to alter the original plan for implementation of the evaluability assessment. Among these is the school district's revision of I.E.P. (individual education plan) data forms at the beginning of the 81-82 school year. While providing more uniform and in-depth assessment of student needs, the new forms do not provide the specificity as to services provided, including social work techniques and materials, as did the previous forms on which the data collection phase of this study was based. Further, the revision resulted in two different sets of I.E.P. forms providing data for this study during the current school year. This negatively effected the reliability associated with practitioner responses. This has required a revision of the content analysis procedures originally outlined and a delay of one year until all forms are once again uniform as to data collection.

Secondly, the sophistication of those completing the I.E.P.'s was somewhat less than anticipated resulting in a lack of consistency in defining student objectives.

Another unforeseen circumstance was a ten percent reduction in social work staff and a 33 percent reduction in the planning and evaluation department following the implementation of this study. This reduction was prompted by an unanticipated withdrawal of state and federal funds to the school district during the first semester and resulted in a reassignment of staff and reduction in previously agreed upon services. Failure to pass a mill levy election in December, 1981, which would have provided the basic minimum level of social work/mental health services to students in the district further limited the staffs' ability to follow through on agreed upon tasks related to the evaluability assessment.

Finally, the review staffing process which is to be used for determining the level of attainment of social work objectives does not occur with most cases until May, 1982, thereby making any full-scale evaluation impossible until that date.

For the above reasons, a more limited sample was used to determine the integrity of the data available. This sample revealed the need to delay by one year the full implementation of the study and make necessary corrections based upon the changed circumstances surrounding the study.

It is evident from this discussion that the rapidly changing dynamics effecting funding and service delivery in the public sector of education and social work requires flexibility in designing and implementing an accountability effort of this type.

While it is not possible to reach empirical consensus as to the value of the study to date, several more subjective indicators should be cited in reviewing the effects of this effort on the social work department and school district.

First, the process of developing program descriptions and goal statements in preparation for the evaluability assessment resulted in a clear statement of program direction for staff, district administrators, and the Board of Education. This concrete action plan, along with frequent communication by the evaluation leader concerning the intent of the study, had the effect of providing an understanding of, and support for, the assessment process. This understanding did much to defuse the normal anxiety and threat experienced by any group or organization about to have their functioning evaluated in terms of program outcome.

The evaluation process stimulated professional initiative on the part of individuals and groups within the social work staff to assess their contribution to program functioning and outcome. In one instance, a staff employee researched the relationship of the present study to previous staff efforts at accountability and discovered that the evaluability assessment process achieved most of the goals set forth by previous staff committees over the years.

Extensive involvement in defining program and evaluation intentions has resulted in a commitment to positive organizational change at a time when such change is necessitated by district reorganization and funding reductions. The process of evaluability assessment provided an "anchor and guidepost" during a time of rapid organizational change and led to a security as to purpose and direction for staff and administration. A greater sense of staff inclusion was frequently mentioned as a positive side benefit of the entire process.

Having served the aforementioned purposes, the next stage becomes even more vital, that of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the direct service component of the school social work program. Despite the presence of unforeseen changes affecting the original plan, a secure foundation has been laid for the implementation of the basic purposes and objectives of the evaluability assessment of school social work services.

Reference

Wholey, Joseph S. Evaluation: Promise and Performance. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1979.

SECTION ONE

CONTEXT OF THE ASSESSMENT

Initiation and Purposes of the Study

The School Social Work Services Evaluability Assessment was initiated in October, 1980, by the program supervisor who described three major reasons for evaluating School Social Work Services:

1. Professional awareness of the need for evaluation;
2. Responsibility to the School Board to document the impact of services on educational outcomes; and
3. Need to establish baseline data against which future changes in the service delivery system will be measured.

Based on these evaluation purposes, the Department of Planning and Evaluation and the School Social Work Services Evaluation Committee[1] held a series of meetings to plan an evaluation study for expected implementation during the school year 1981-82. Initially two major evaluation objectives were predominant:

1. To define and describe significant process variables in the service delivery system which effect the quality of services to students;
2. To assess the impact of social work services on educational outcomes.

However, initial discussions revealed the need to review and revise existing program descriptions and goal statements. The Committee found that these documents inadequately expressed the philosophy and scope of their role as social workers in the school setting. Extensive discussions were conducted to develop a description of program goals and activities which (1) would serve as a framework for the evaluation and (2) could be used as a brochure to inform other staff and the community about School Social Work Services. The program description developed by the Committee is presented in the next section of this report.

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[1] In addition to the authors, the Committee included: John M. Archuleta, Tim Cole, Ann Duellman, George S. Farina, Pat Hutcherson, Cheryl Marvel, Vivian Stith-Williams, and Karyl R. Urig.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

School Social Work Services

The goal of the social work program is to help students with school maladjustment or learning problems function better in the school setting and take full advantage of their educational opportunities.

To meet this goal, staff social workers engage in six categories of activities:

- Assessment
- Direct service
- Consultation
- Liaison
- Administrative duties, and
- Professional growth activities.

Specific examples of activities in each category are given below.

Assessment. Social workers primarily assess individual students and develop educational plans. They also assess families, groups (e.g., classrooms), building climate and the community. As a member of an assessment team, school social workers gather assessment information from students, parents, teachers, school records, and community resources; take social histories; and observe individuals and groups of students in the classroom, lunchroom, play area and on field trips.

Factors considered in psycho-social assessment include:

1. Personal characteristics, developmental health and family history, attitudes and behavior of the child who has been referred;
2. Interpersonal problems within the family or peer group;
3. Reports on the child's problem from teachers or other pupil specialists;
4. Institutional factors that may affect children's behaviors.

The assessment information is used to determine if the child has a handicap and if so, to develop an Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.) for the child.

Direct Services. Direct services are therapeutic interventions which, while focused on the student, involve their families, other students, and staff. Direct services also are provided to staff through inservices. Direct services activities include the following examples:

- Regular sessions with individual students or groups of students using a variety of techniques (for example: play therapy and behavior modification);
- Crisis intervention;
- Meetings with parents and parent groups to help parents through such activities as developing goals, personal assessment, budget counseling, developing parenting skills, family and marriage counseling and developmental issues such as emancipation/hygiene;
- Supportive activities with children such as hiking/walking lunching, mini-field trips, playing games, problem solving, and outdoor education/experiential activities;
- Affective education experiences in the classroom;
- Miscellaneous concrete services such as transportation, hospital visits, providing basic necessities for families.

Consultation. Social workers consult with administrators, teachers, parents, and each other on a variety of matters ranging from direct services provision for an individual student to the planning of new programs. Examples of consultation include the following activities:

- Conferring with school personnel and parents regarding the interaction of pupil characteristics and school policies and practices, the home, neighborhood, and community conditions affecting pupil welfare;
- Conferring and collaborating with community services representatives to identify effects of interacting school-community-pupil characteristics and to develop resources to meet needs of a child or target group, to develop alternative education programs, and plan for crisis intervention services;
- Conferring with teachers about pupils' life situations and recurrent types of crises;
- Conferring and collaborating with school personnel to develop opportunities for handicapped pupils, avenues for pupils' pursuit of life goals, equality of the sexes, and respect for cultural differences;
- Representing students and the school during legal proceedings.

Liaison. School social workers are knowledgeable about services and personnel in the community which enables them to assist by:

- Using cooperative procedures to ensure appropriate referrals;
- Establishing and maintaining mutual communication with community resources;
- Keeping the community including parents, aware of the philosophy, policies and services of the school;
- Helping the community including parents, to better use the schools' services;
- Facilitating the use of community resources in the schools;
- Serving on various committees, boards, and teams.

Administrative Duties. As employees of School District 11, school social workers participate in school activities and share administrative duties. School social workers adhere to professional standards of time management, record keeping and reporting, and program evaluation. They also assist in the education of professional social work and counseling students by supervising students in field work experiences and by providing other appropriate learning experiences for social work students.

School social workers represent their profession to school personnel by interpreting their overall goals, objectives, and tasks of their particular pupil specialty. This process helps school administrators maintain an accurate perception of appropriate social works tasks and ensures maintenance of social workers' primary professional activities and competencies.

Professional Growth. As members of the social work profession, school social workers are committed to professional growth. Social workers extend their knowledge and skills in a variety of ways:

- By participating in the program evaluation as well as by conscious and on-going self-evaluation;
- By attending and/or contributing to staff development seminars, workshops, inservices, professional meetings and conferences;

- By professional reading, including major social work journals and journals of related disciplines, books, and other relevant literature;
- By supervising new staff school social workers;
- By peer supervising and consulting for experienced social workers;
- By continuing education courses; and
- By membership in local, state and national professional organizations.

SECTION TWO

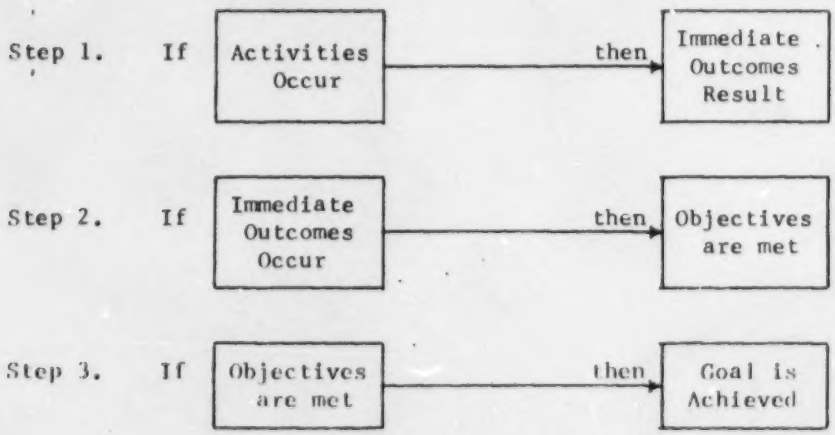
PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

After developing the program statement given in the preceding section, the Evaluation Committee directed its attention at specifying outcomes expected from the six categories of activities. The outcomes were of two types:

1. Immediate outcomes. These outcomes are the expected direct results of social worker activities. They are steppingstones on the way to behavioral and attitudinal changes necessary to meet the program goal.

2. Objectives. Objectives are statements of decisions or changes required to meet the program goal. Immediate outcomes are pre-requisite to the program objectives.

The two types of outcomes, combined with the program activities, reflect the assumptions of causality on which the School Social Work Program operates. The logic goes like this:



The Committee developed statements of activities, outcomes, and objectives in the categories of direct services, assessment, consultation, liaison, administrative duties and professional growth. These statements are presented in Figures 1-6.

Strategies to determine if the causal sequence is occurring at each step are described in the Evaluation Options section of this report.

FIGURE 1.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MODEL

ASSESSMENT

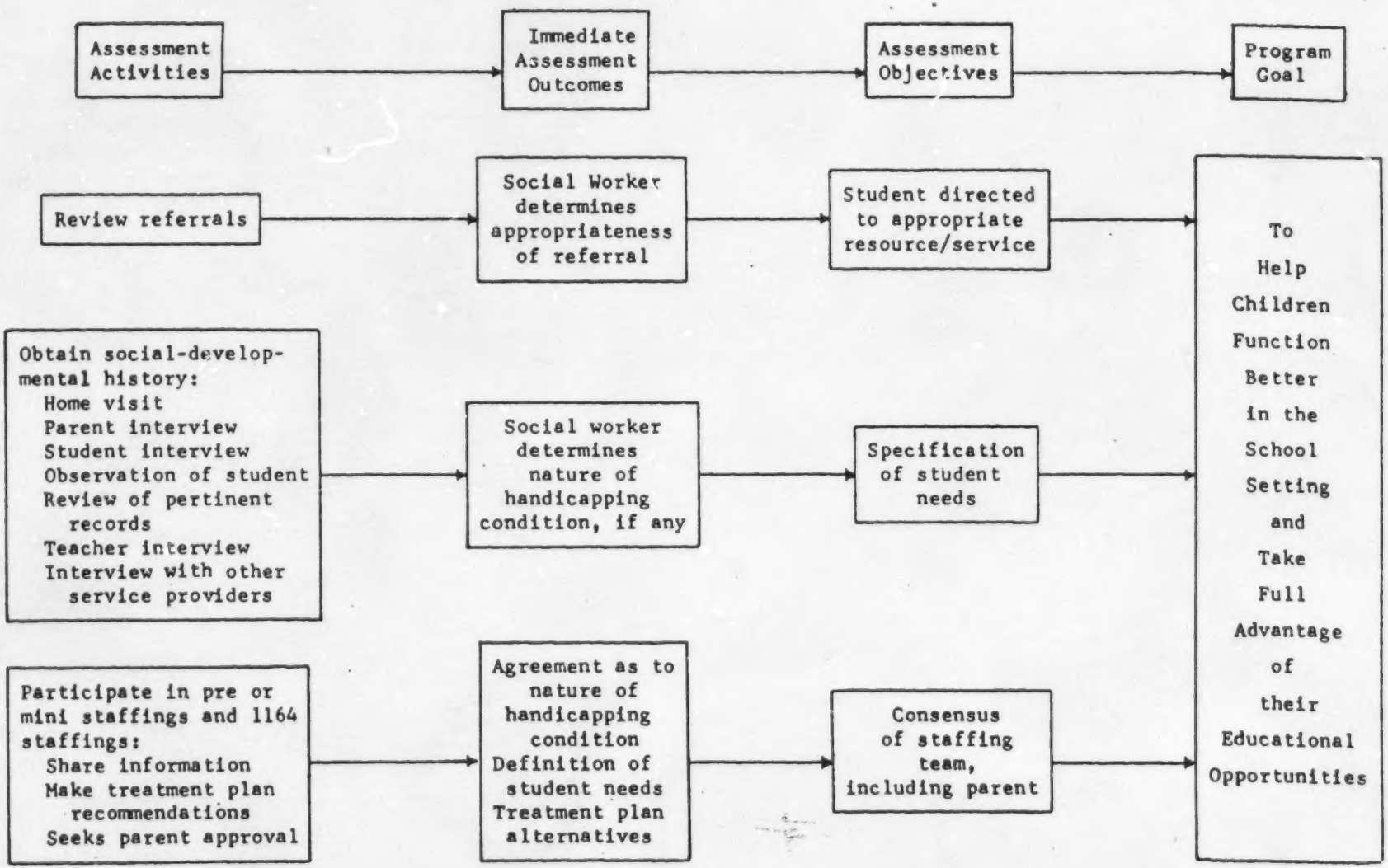
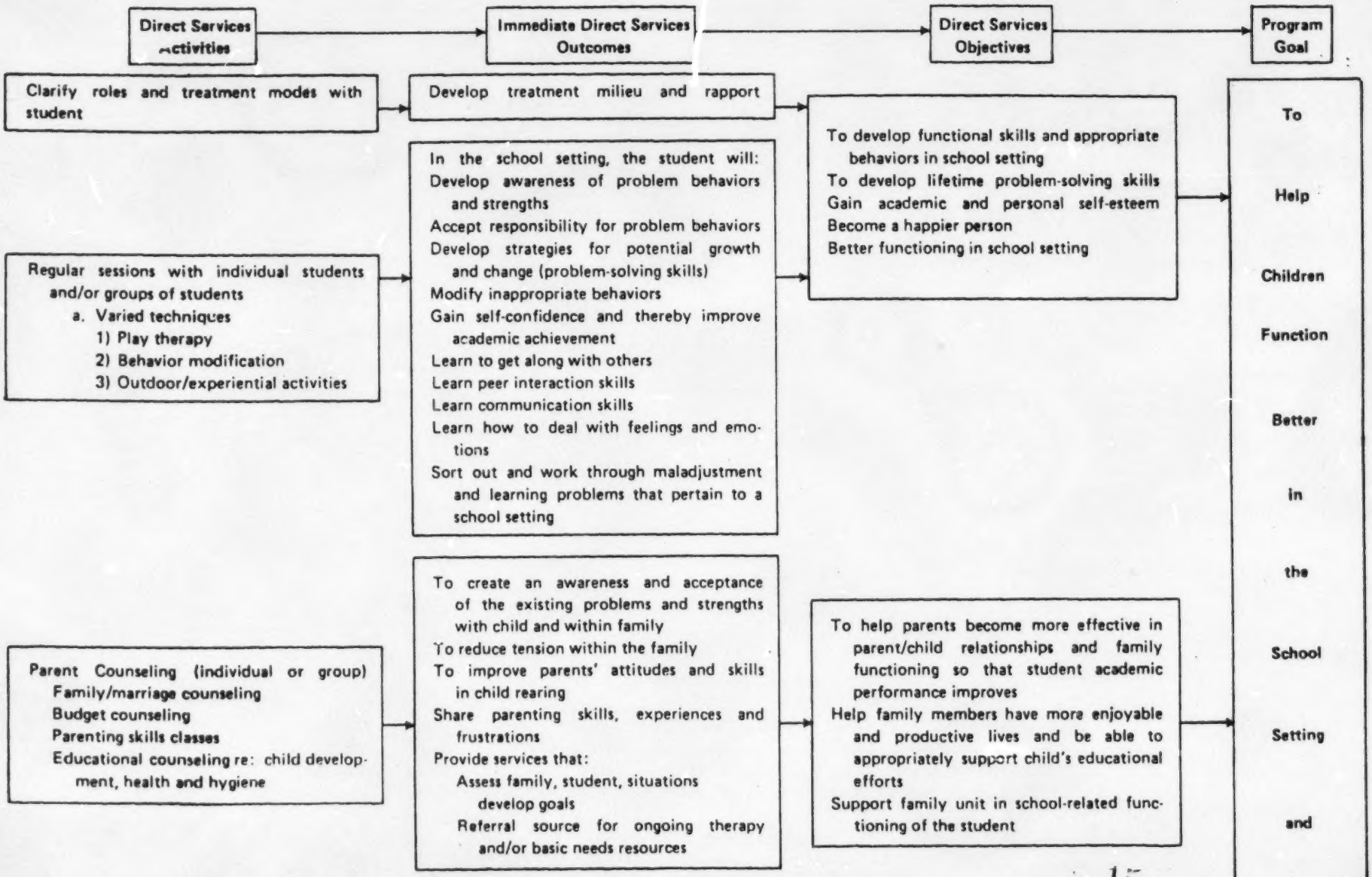

Assessment Activities
Immediate Assessment Outcomes
Assessment Objectives
Program Goal
Review referrals
Social Worker determines appropriateness of referral
Student directed to appropriate resource/service
Obtain social-developmental history:
Home visit
Parent interview
Student interview
Observation of student
Review of pertinent records
Teacher interview
Interview with other service providers
Social worker determines nature of handicapping condition, if any
Specification of student needs
Participate in pre or mini staffings and 1164 staffings:
Share information
Make treatment plan recommendations
Seeks parent approval
Agreement as to nature of handicapping condition
Definition of student needs
Treatment plan alternatives
Consensus of staffing team, including parent
To Help Children Function Better in the School Setting and Take Full Advantage of their Educational Opportunities

FIGURE 2.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MODEL

DIRECT SERVICES


Direct Services Activities
Immediate Direct Services Outcomes
Direct Services Objectives
Program Goal
Clarify roles and treatment modes with student
Develop treatment milieu and rapport
Regular sessions with individual students and/or groups of students
a. Varied techniques
1) Play therapy
2) Behavior modification
3) Outdoor/experiential activities
In the school setting, the student will:
Develop awareness of problem behaviors and strengths
Accept responsibility for problem behaviors
Develop strategies for potential growth and change (problem-solving skills)
Modify inappropriate behaviors
Gain self-confidence and thereby improve academic achievement
Learn to get along with others
Learn peer interaction skills
Learn communication skills
Learn how to deal with feelings and emotions
Sort out and work through maladjustment and learning problems that pertain to a school setting
To develop functional skills and appropriate behaviors in school setting
To develop lifetime problem-solving skills
Gain academic and personal self-esteem
Become a happier person
Better functioning in school setting
Parent Counseling (individual or group)
Family/marriage counseling
Budget counseling
Parenting skills classes
Educational counseling re: child development, health and hygiene
To create an awareness and acceptance of the existing problems and strengths with child and within family
To reduce tension within the family
To improve parents' attitudes and skills in child rearing
Share parenting skills, experiences and frustrations
Provide services that:
Assess family, student, situations develop goals
Referral source for ongoing therapy and/or basic needs resources
To help parents become more effective in parent/child relationships and family functioning so that student academic performance improves
Help family members have more enjoyable and productive lives and be able to appropriately support child's educational efforts
Support family unit in school-related functioning of the student
To Help Children Function Better in the School Setting and

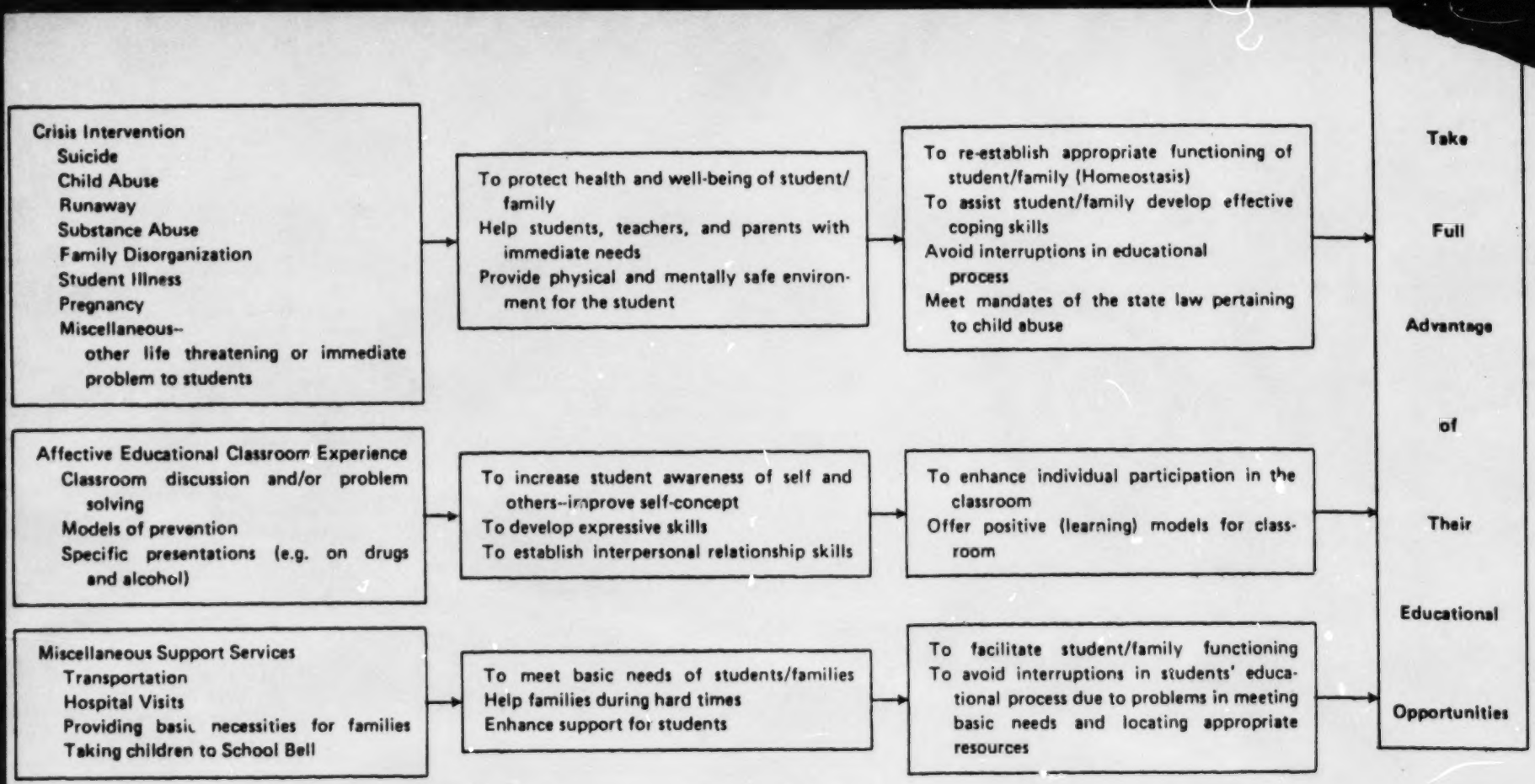

Crisis Intervention
Suicide
Child Abuse
Runaway
Substance Abuse
Family Disorganization
Student Illness
Pregnancy
Miscellaneous--
other life threatening or immediate problem to students
To protect health and well-being of student/family
Help students, teachers, and parents with immediate needs
Provide physical and mentally safe environment for the student
To re-establish appropriate functioning of student/family (Homeostasis)
To assist student/family develop effective coping skills
Avoid interruptions in educational process
Meet mandates of the state law pertaining to child abuse
Affective Educational Classroom Experience
Classroom discussion and/or problem solving
Models of prevention
Specific presentations (e.g. on drugs and alcohol)
To increase student awareness of self and others--improve self-concept
To develop expressive skills
To establish interpersonal relationship skills
To enhance individual participation in the classroom
Offer positive (learning) models for classroom
Miscellaneous Support Services
Transportation
Hospital Visits
Providing basic necessities for families
Taking children to School Bell
To meet basic needs of students/families
Help families during hard times
Enhance support for students
To facilitate student/family functioning
To avoid interruptions in students' educational process due to problems in meeting basic needs and locating appropriate resources
Take
Full
Advantage
of
Their
Educational
Opportunities

FIGURE 3.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MODEL

CONSULTATION

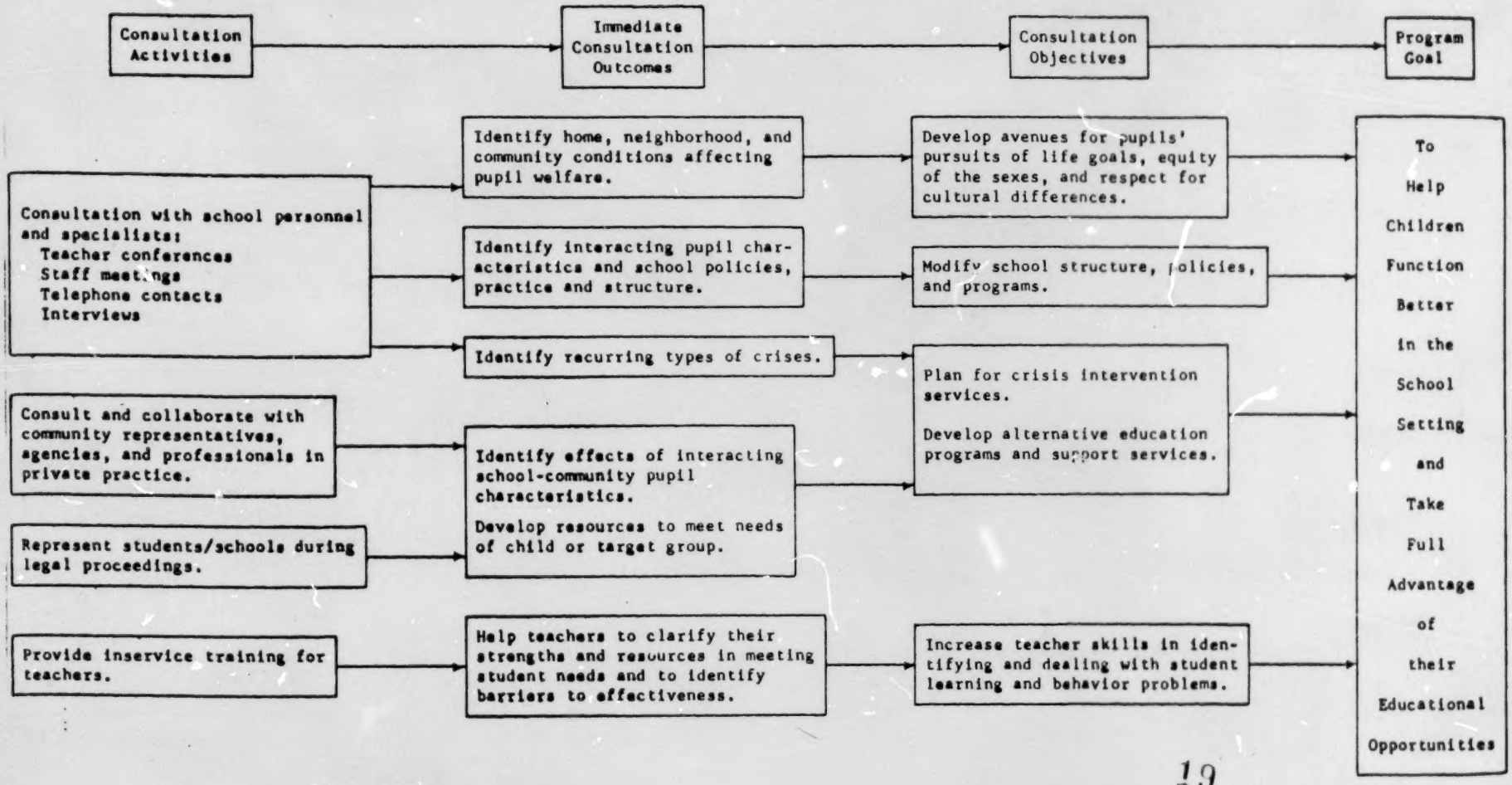

Consultation Activities
Immediate Consultation Outcomes
Consultation Objectives
Program Goal
Consultation with school personnel and specialists:
Teacher conferences
Staff meetings
Telephone contacts
Interviews
Consult and collaborate with community representatives, agencies, and professionals in private practice.
Represent students/schools during legal proceedings.
Provide inservice training for teachers.
Identify home, neighborhood, and community conditions affecting pupil welfare.
Identify interacting pupil characteristics and school policies, practice and structure.
Identify recurring types of crises.
Identify effects of interacting school-community pupil characteristics.
Develop resources to meet needs of child or target group.
Help teachers to clarify their strengths and resources in meeting student needs and to identify barriers to effectiveness.
Develop avenues for pupils' pursuits of life goals, equity of the sexes, and respect for cultural differences.
Modify school structure, policies, and programs.
Plan for crisis intervention services.
Develop alternative education programs and support services.
Increase teacher skills in identifying and dealing with student learning and behavior problems.
To Help Children Function Better in the School Setting and Take Full Advantage of their Educational Opportunities

FIGURE 4.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MODEL

LIAISON

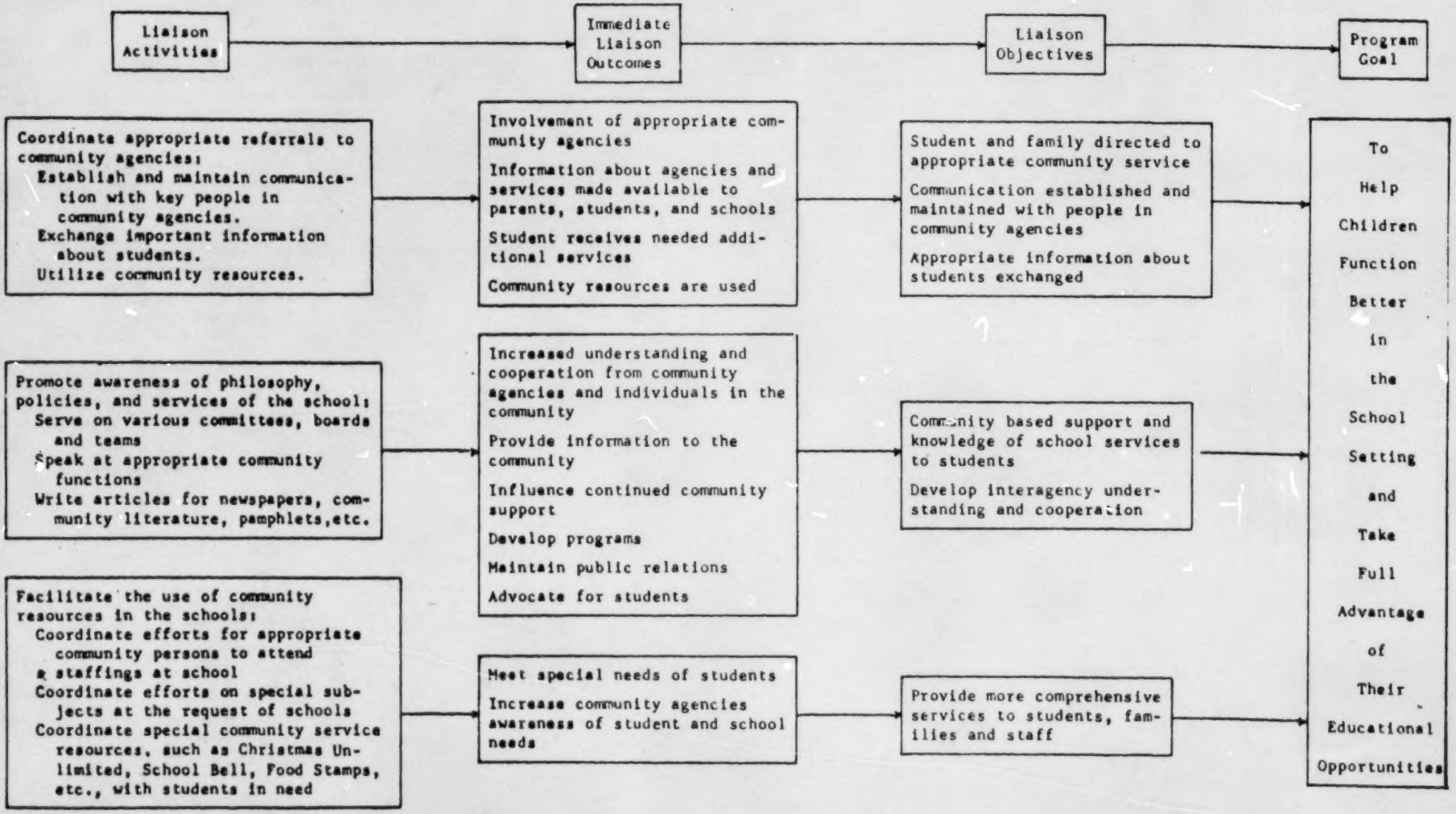

Liaison Activities
Immediate Liaison Outcomes
Liaison Objectives
Program Goal
Coordinate appropriate referrals to community agencies:
Establish and maintain communication with key people in community agencies.
Exchange important information about students.
Utilize community resources.
Involvement of appropriate community agencies
Information about agencies and services made available to parents, students, and schools
Student receives needed additional services
Community resources are used
Student and family directed to appropriate community service
Communication established and maintained with people in community agencies
Appropriate information about students exchanged
Promote awareness of philosophy, policies, and services of the school:
Serve on various committees, boards and teams
Speak at appropriate community functions
Write articles for newspapers, community literature, pamphlets,etc.
Increased understanding and cooperation from community agencies and individuals in the community
Provide information to the community
Influence continued community support
Develop programs
Maintain public relations
Advocate for students
Community based support and knowledge of school services to students
Develop interagency understanding and cooperation
Facilitate the use of community resources in the schools:
Coordinate efforts for appropriate community persons to attend staffings at school
Coordinate efforts on special subjects at the request of schools
Coordinate special community service resources, such as Christmas Unlimited, School Bell, Food Stamps, etc., with students in need
Meet special needs of students
Increase community agencies awareness of student and school needs
Provide more comprehensive services to students, families and staff
To Help Children Function Better in the School Setting and Take Full Advantage of Their Educational Opportunities

FIGURE 5.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MODEL

ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

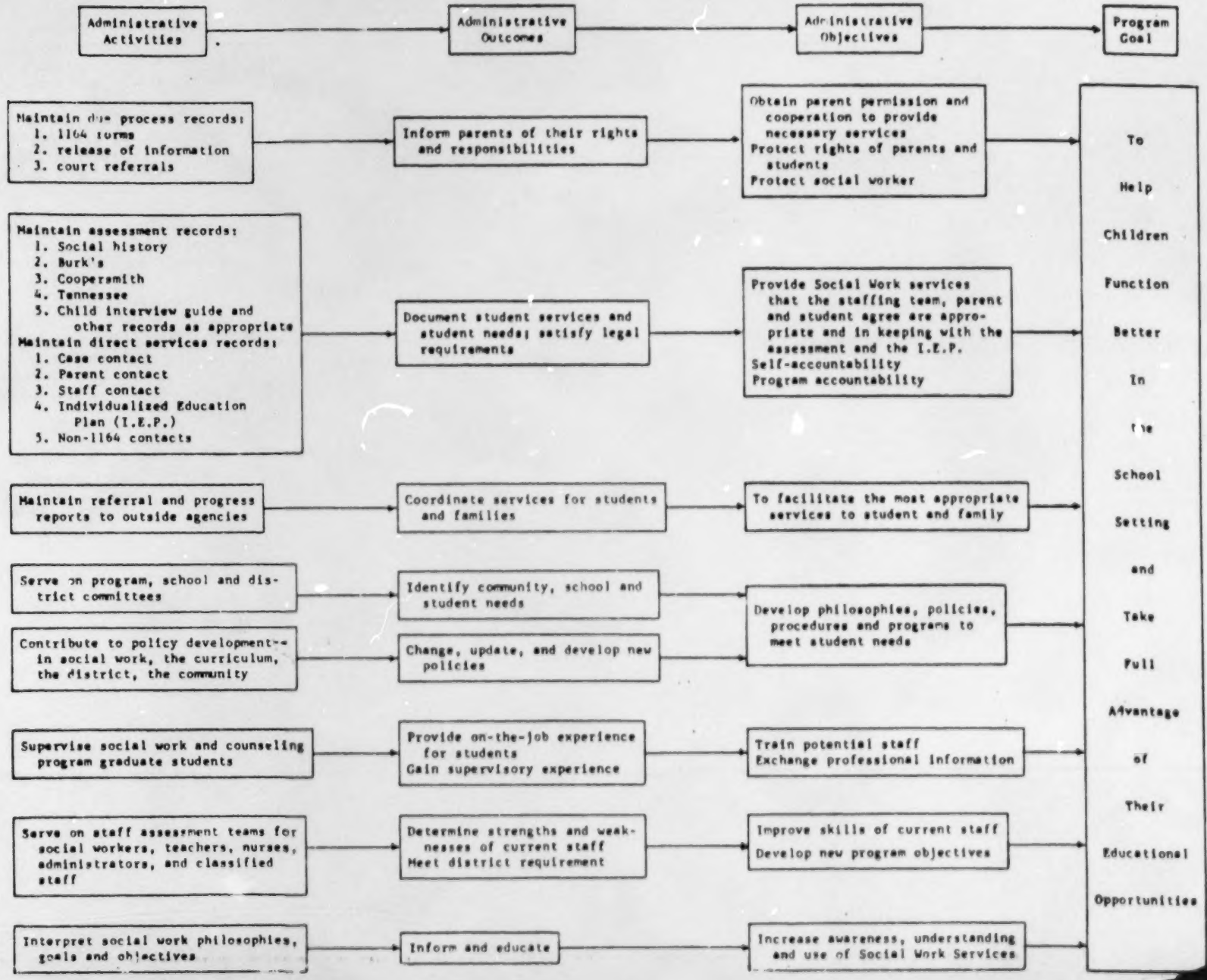
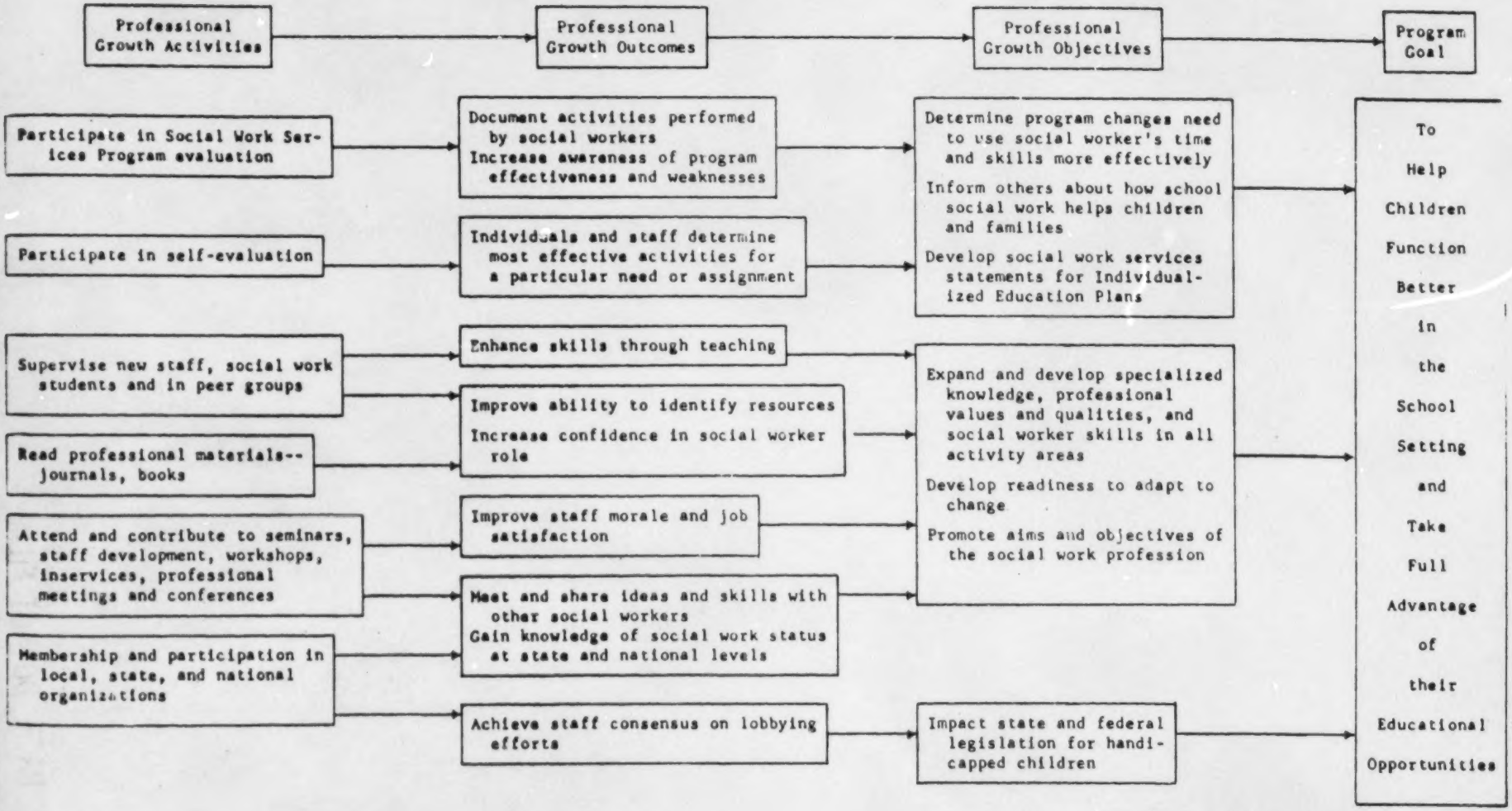

Administrative Activities
Administrative Outcomes
Administrative Objectives
Program Goal
Maintain due process records:
1. 1164 forms
2. release of information
3. court referrals
Inform parents of their rights and responsibilities
Obtain parent permission and cooperation to provide necessary services
Protect rights of parents and students
Protect social worker
Maintain assessment records:
1. Social history
2. Burk's
3. Coopersmith
4. Tennessee
5. Child interview guide and other records as appropriate
Maintain direct services records:
1. Case contact
2. Parent contact
3. Staff contact
4. Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.)
5. Non-1164 contacts
Document student services and student needs; satisfy legal requirements
Provide Social Work services that the staffing team, parent and student agree are appropriate and in keeping with the assessment and the I.E.P.
Self-accountability
Program accountability
Maintain referral and progress reports to outside agencies
Coordinate services for students and families
To facilitate the most appropriate services to student and family
Serve on program, school and district committees
Identify community, school and student needs
Develop philosophies, policies, procedures and programs to meet student needs
Contribute to policy development--in social work, the curriculum, the district, the community
Change, update, and develop new policies
Supervise social work and counseling program graduate students
Provide on-the-job experience for students
Gain supervisory experience
Train potential staff
Exchange professional information
Serve on staff assessment teams for social workers, teachers, nurses, administrators, and classified staff
Determine strengths and weaknesses of current staff
Meet district requirement
Improve skills of current staff
Develop new program objectives
Interpret social work philosophies, goals and objectives
Inform and educate
Increase awareness, understanding and use of Social Work Services
To Help Children Function Better In the School Setting and Take Full Advantage of Their Educational Opportunities

FIGURE 6.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM MODEL

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH


Professional Growth Activities
Professional Growth Outcomes
Professional Growth Objectives
Program Goal
Participate in Social Work Services Program evaluation
Participate in self-evaluation
Supervise new staff, social work students and in peer groups
Read professional materials--journals, books
Attend and contribute to seminars, staff development, workshops, inservices, professional meetings and conferences
Membership and participation in local, state, and national organizations
Document activities performed by social workers
Increase awareness of program effectiveness and weaknesses
Individuals and staff determine most effective activities for a particular need or assignment
Enhance skills through teaching
Improve ability to identify resources
Increase confidence in social worker role
Improve staff morale and job satisfaction
Meet and share ideas and skills with other social workers
Gain knowledge of social work status at state and national levels
Achieve staff consensus on lobbying efforts
Determine program changes need to use social worker's time and skills more effectively
Inform others about how school social work helps children and families
Develop social work services statements for Individualized Education Plans
Expand and develop specialized knowledge, professional values and qualities, and social worker skills in all activity areas
Develop readiness to adapt to change
Promote aims and objectives of the social work profession
Impact state and federal legislation for handicapped children
To Help Children Function Better in the School Setting and Take Full Advantage of their Educational Opportunities

SECTION THREE

RELATIONSHIP TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

School Social Work Services is one of fifteen support programs that serve handicapped students. Services to handicapped students are regulated by the provisions of two statutes: P.L. 94-142, the federal Education of the Handicapped Act, and H.B. 1164, the Colorado Education of Handicapped Children Law. These laws mandate the service delivery system depicted in Figure 6. The system's goal is to ensure the educational and due process rights of handicapped students.

P.L. 94-142 Mandated School Social Worker Functions

School Social Workers have four statutory functions in the Special Education System:

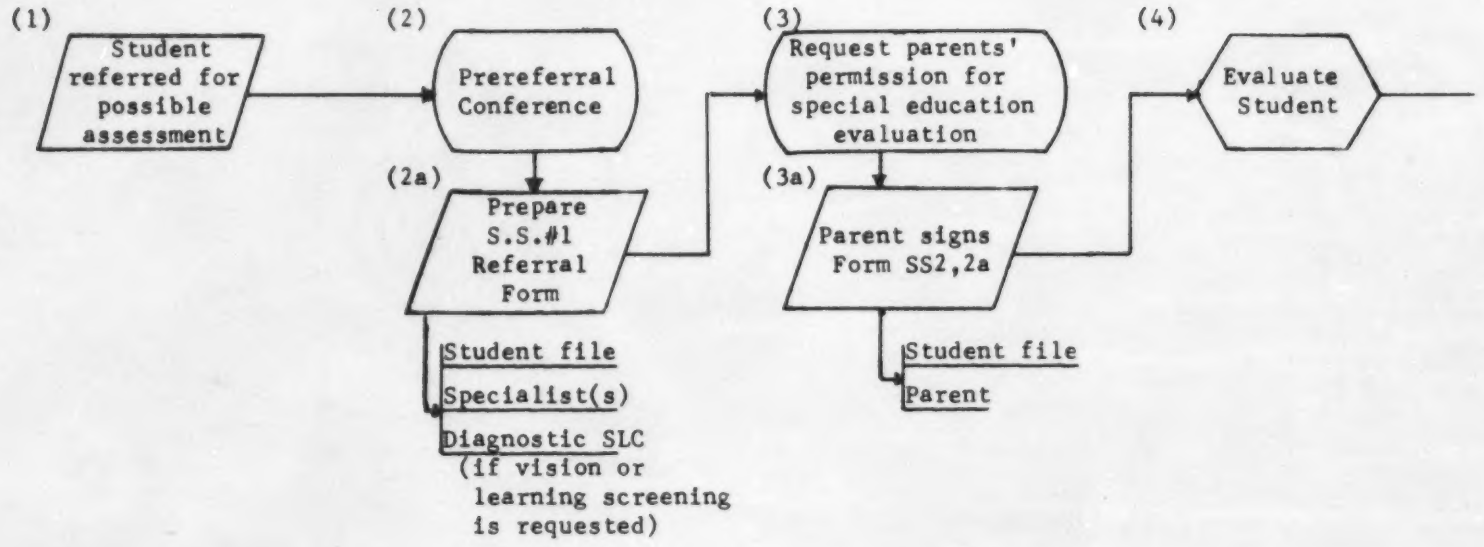
School Social Worker prepares a psycho-social history on the handicapped student. This includes developmental findings, school history, adaptive behavior checklist, and an assessment of family dynamics as they relate to the handicap.

School Social Worker will provide individual and group counseling to the student and the student's family.

School Social Worker will work with those problems in a student's living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the student's adjustment in school.

School Social Worker will serve as liaison with community resources to enable the student to receive maximum benefit from the educational program.

Figure 6. Special Education Services System and Forms Flow Chart.

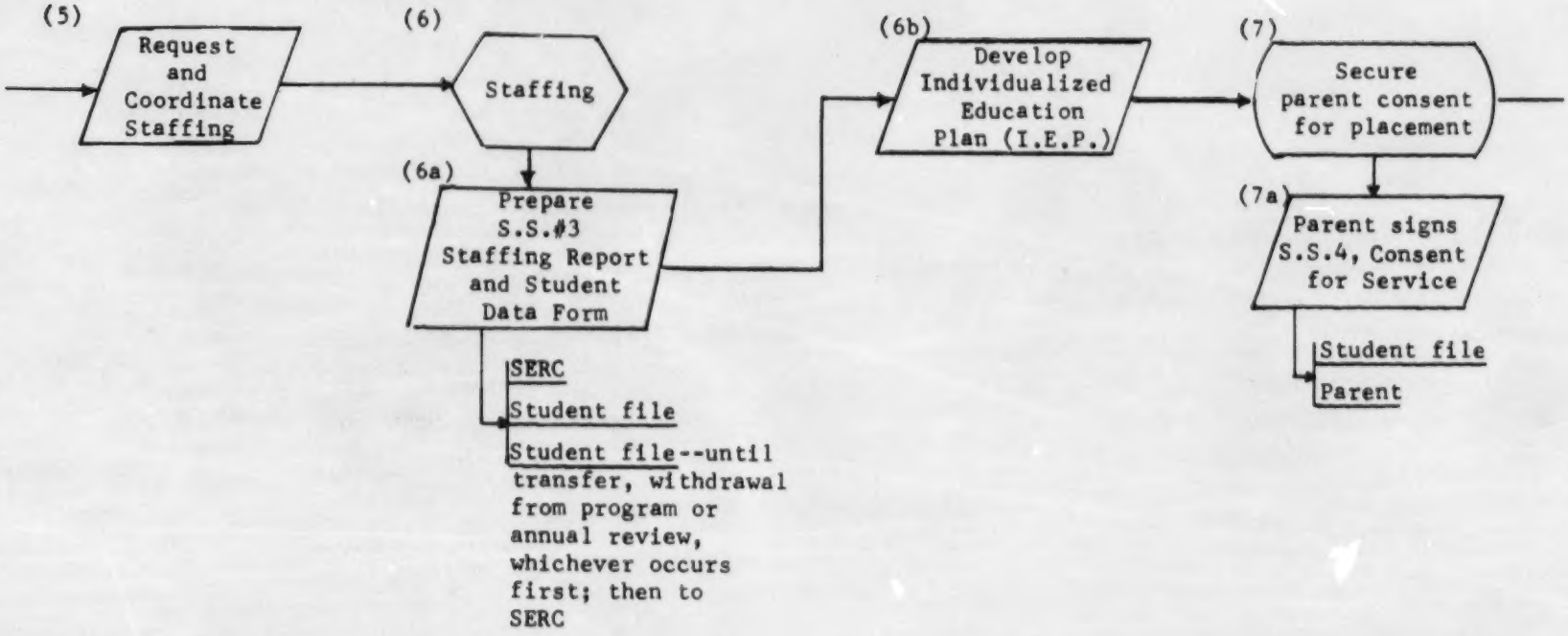


(1)
When a teacher, or the Child Find screening program, identifies a child who appears to have difficulties that interfere with learning or the learning process of others, or the child appears not to be progressing in the regular classroom, or is seen as needing some form of additional assistance, the child should be referred.

(2)
The principal, referring teacher, at least one specialist in the area of concern, and, if possible, the child's parents, discuss possible modifications in the general education program to meet the student's needs. If there is evidence of a possible handicap, the special education procedural safeguards must be observed throughout the remaining steps.

(3)
The four procedural safeguards which must be observed at each phase of the Special Education process ensure due process procedures for parents and children, protection in evaluation procedures, the least restrictive environment placement, and confidentiality of information.

(4)
The assessment process evaluates the child's abilities and needs in five functional areas: psychological, communicative, educational, physical, and social. Assessment must occur within 20 days after the parent grants permission. If the parent refuses permission, the school may appeal to the State Department of Education and/or the courts.

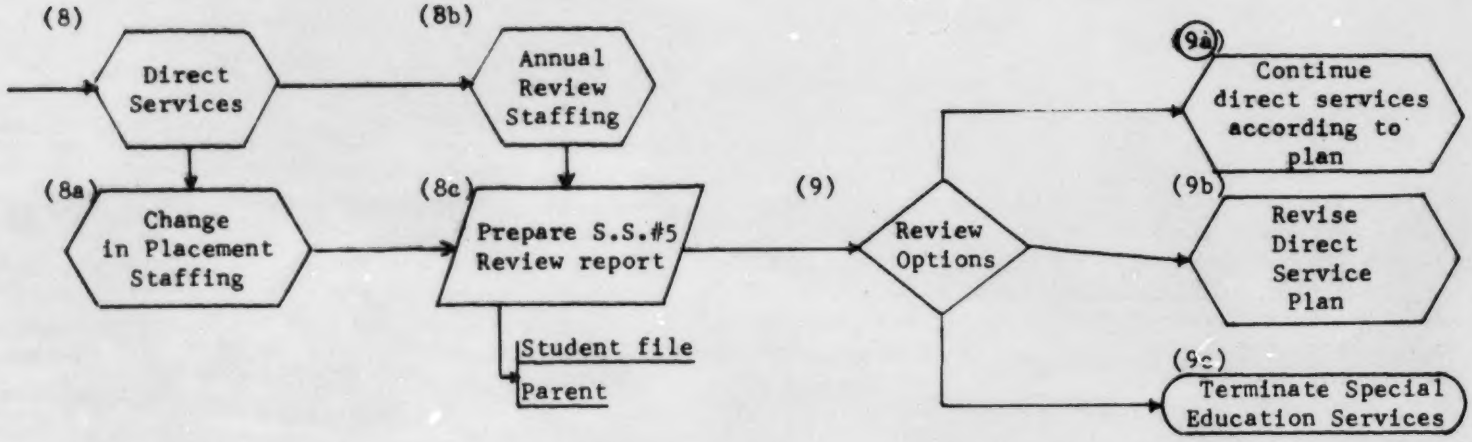


(5)
The Special Education coordinator in a particular school prepares paperwork and notifies members of the staffing team. Parents are notified in writing and invited to attend the staffing. A pre-staffing meeting may be held to review materials and discuss special circumstances.

(6)
On the basis of the assessment results, the staffing team determines the child's level of handicapping condition, special education needs, the characteristics of services needed to meet the child's identified needs, and long term (i.e., annual) goals for the student's Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.).

(6b)
Within 30 days of the staffing, the child's teacher or counselor, a special education teacher, the child's parents, and, in some instances, other specialists and the child, complete the I.E.P. summary of student abilities and needs and the detailed direct service plan.

(7)
Parents may request an independent evaluation of their child if they disagree with the findings of the staffing teams. Decisions regarding their child's placement may be appealed through the due process procedures.



(8)
A child who has been determined to be handicapped and placed in a special education program shall continue to participate in such a program as long as the child's individual needs are being appropriately met or until handicap is remediated in terms of school adjustment.

(9)
Review staffings are held as needed to review student progress and information that suggests a change in placement may be needed. At a minimum, for District 11 students, a review staffing must be held annually. Parents must be notified prior to the review staffing.

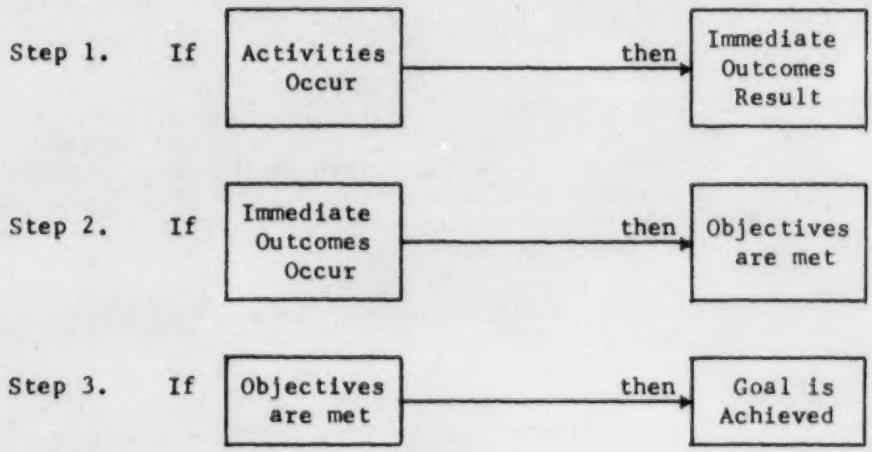
Guide to Symbols

- Routinized process
- Decision process
- Complex process
- Branching point
- Termination point

SECTION FOUR

EVALUATION OPTIONS

In a preceding section of this report, the following program logic model was introduced:



The purpose of program evaluation is to test the validity of the causal assumptions inherent in program models. In so doing, program evaluation documents the degree of program efficiency and effectiveness.

At Step 1, program evaluation addresses the following major questions:

Are the activities occurring as planned?
If not, why not?
What are the results of the activities?
Are the immediate outcomes achieved?
What other (unanticipated) results occur?

Evaluation of Step 2 attempts to demonstrate the relationship between the achievement of immediate objectives and the achievement of program objectives. Evaluation of Step 3 is similar to Step 2 evaluation; the relationship between achievement of program objectives and goal attainment is assessed.

Evaluation of Step 2 and Step 3 are commonly called impact, product or summative evaluation. Evaluation of Step 1 is referred to as process evaluation, performance monitoring, or formative evaluation.

Both types of program evaluation can be useful to program managers. Process variables important in Step 1 usually can be defined and measured and problems that interfere with the desired process can be identified.

Process evaluation has two major strengths:

1. Readily available information may be adequate to answer process evaluation questions.

2. Frequently, the program manager can change the program to correct the identified problems.

Summative evaluation, however, usually requires much more time and money to provide conclusive and usable information. This requirement results from the fact that at Step 2 and Step 3, other factors beyond the control of the program may facilitate or prevent the desired impact. These factors typically can only be estimated, not directly measured.

Cost-effective evaluations generally result when program managers define specific evaluation questions and uses for program performance information before finalizing an evaluation plan. Opportunities to change program activities and objectives also should be identified so that data-gathering efforts provide information relevant to these areas of potential change. To help select from among the many possible evaluation questions that could be asked about School Social Work Services, a list of evaluation issues is provided below. These issues resulted from the Evaluation Committee discussions. For each issue, possible quantifiable measures are suggested.

The issues have been reviewed by the following persons: a principal at each academic level, elementary, junior high, and senior high; the entire School Social Work Services staff, the program supervisor, the Administrative Assistant for Student Support Services, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and the Superintendent. The reviewers (1) critiqued the validity of the program model which the issues address and (2) prioritized the issues as they relate to information needs and likely utility. The reviewer comments are summarized in "Evaluability Assessment Conclusions and Recommendations."

School Social Work Services: Referral

Evaluation Issues	Possible Measures
1. How effective and efficient is the referral process?	Number of students served compared with number of students referred (includes numbers screened, staffed, awaiting staffing, awaiting placement, receiving appropriate services without special education).
2. Are regular education alternatives exhausted before referral to Special Education?	Number of inappropriate referrals to Special Education process (no I.E.P. developed after referral).
3. How does the lack of consistent guidelines effect the referral process?	Referral patterns: reasons for referral person(s) making referral actual practices
4. What distinguishes social work referrals for possible emotional/ behavioral handicapping condition as compared with situation specific personal, family, or academic problems?	Comparison of case records for samples of students in each category.
5. Are referrals to outside agencies meeting students' needs?	Followup survey to teachers and parents of students referred to outside agencies.
6. What outcomes result from the referral conference?	Percent of parents accepting recommendations. Modifications in general education program. Referrals for social work assessment.

School Social Work Services: Assessment

Evaluation Issues	Possible Measures
1. How appropriate is the content of social histories?	Content analysis of social histories compared with services referral, placement and outcome information.
2. How does the lack of consistent guidelines effect the assessment process?	Survey of staff to determine variations in assessment practices and subsequent differences in assessment outcomes: determination of appropriate referral; nature of handicapping condition, if any; student needs; and treatment plan alternatives.

Evaluation Issues	Possible Measures
3. What circumstances tend to produce consensus (particularly parent consent) at staffing?	Review Staffing Report and Student Data forms; critical incident interviews with staffing team members.
4. How efficient and effective is the staffing process?	Number of I.E.P.s developed compared with number of staffings. Number and type of assessments conducted compared with staffing outcomes. Number and types of diagnosis compared with staffing outcomes.

School Social Work Services: Direct Services

Evaluation Issues	Possible Measures
1. How efficient and effective are student direct service treatment plans in meeting established goals?	Number and type of services specified in I.E.P.s compared with number and type of services provided. Resources used to provide direct services (staff time, purchased services). Types of services, techniques and materials and length of time receiving each service compared with handicapping condition and I.E.P. goal attainment.
2. Are I.E.P. objectives clear?	Content analyses of I.E.P.s. Survey of teachers and direct service providers.
3. What is the impact of self-concept improvement on academic achievement?	Repeated self-concept measures: Coopersmith, Primary Self-esteem, Burks, Tennesse Inventory of Self-Concept compared with I.E.P. goals, grades, attendance records.

School Social Work Services: Consultation

Evaluation Issues	Possible Measures
1. Is too much or too little time spent in consultation activities as compared to other social work tasks?	Time-Task analysis.

Social Work Services: Administration

Evaluation Issues	Possible Measures
1. Are records maintained in compliance with statutory requirements?	Colorado Department of Education April, 1981 On-Site review observations. Review of program documentation.
2. Do student records provide necessary information to orient a social worker if the student transfers to a new school?	Survey of social workers experience.
3. What is the effect of required paperwork and meetings on time available for direct services?	Analysis of paperwork and meeting efficiency (including variations in practice at building level).

Social Work Services: Professional Growth

1. How does the professional training and orientation of District 11 social workers vary?	Personnel records of training and experience. Survey of staff professional attitudes and practices.
2. Given limited funds for professional development, how can school social workers best improve their skills?	Survey to determine training needs. Review of staff development strategies.

Discussions with school social workers suggested two areas of concern which effect all aspects of their work:

a. need for increased communication and
b. need for role clarification.

These concerns are expressed in the following specific examples given by the committee.

Communication Concerns

1. Need for improved relationships with other resources in the community.
2. Need to reduce duplication of services provided by human service agencies, by District 11 programs, and by school social workers.
3. Need to reduce isolation of principals and other groups within Special Education.
4. Need for increased opportunities for case consultation.

Role Clarification

1. Need to establish limits on function and domain. Social workers currently have no limit on caseload size but cannot accommodate all students in need of services. If other related programs are reduced, School Social Work cannot be expected to pick up the excess. If the Social Work program is reduced, will its effectiveness be reduced to where it is no longer considered valuable? In short, how should the job be defined to prevent being spread too thin? A related concern is appropriate division of labor among counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

2. Need for support and assistance in balancing demands for consistency in administrative procedures with professional and pragmatic needs for versatility and flexibility to meet unique conditions at each building.

3. Need to reduce conflicts between statutory requirements and administrative practices/board policies.

4. Need for clarification of the authority structure. As shown in the Student Personnel Services organizational chart (Appendix A), both principals and the program supervisor have line authority over school social workers. This dual reporting relationship results in potential conflicts in administrative directives, inconsistent expectations on the part of other staff, and it may be related to some social workers' perception that supervision is lacking.

5. Need to improve teachers' understanding of social work role.

In addition to the above issues, the Committee expressed concerns related to administrative support for the program: lack of continuity due to multiple assignments and changes in assignments, lack of substitutes to take their place,* lack of adequate office space, and inadequate compensation for job-related personal expenses (e.g., mileage reimbursement, no policy for compensatory time,* no policy for personal expenditures). These concerns also could be the subject of administrative study.

*Policies related to these issues have been developed this year but are not fully implemented at all schools.

SECTION FIVE

EVALUABILITY ASSESSMENT CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluability assessment attempts to answer six questions:

1. What are the ongoing program activities, including resource and information flows?

2. How plausible are the program activities in meeting program objectives?

3. To what extent are program objectives defined in measurable terms?

4. How feasible is measurement of progress toward program objectives?

5. To what extent are specific uses for program performance data defined?

6. What opportunities exist to change program activities, objectives, and uses of information in ways likely to improve program performance?

The first four questions have been addressed in ongoing discussions with the School Social Work Services Evaluation Committee and administrative staff in District 11. The School Social Work Services program model and the Special Education Systems flow chart describe (1) the ongoing program activities, including information flow, (2) the connections between activities, outcomes, and objectives and (3) quantifiable statements of objectives. Under the Special Education record-keeping requirements, School Social Work Services maintains detailed records on services provided and student outcomes. The Individualized Education Plan and other student records are major potential sources of data related to educational impact. Therefore, it is feasible to measure progress toward most program objectives without construction of new data collection systems. A detailed review of these records affords the most useful beginning point for intensive evaluation of the School Social Work Services Program.

Questions 5 and 6 were addressed during the report review process. The major concern of reviewers is to document the effectiveness of direct services. Information on the student outcomes following social worker intervention would help in the planning of staff activities.

Priorities

Priority ratings were received from twenty-eight staff social workers and six administrators. The top priority areas for staff social workers were:

What is the impact of self-concept improvement on academic achievement? (Average rating = 3.44)

How efficient and effective are student direct service treatment plans in meeting established goals? (Average rating = 3.36)

Are regular education alternatives exhausted before referral to Special Education? (Average rating = 3.15)

Need to establish limits in function and domain. (Average rating = 3.14)

Each of the above issues were rated high priority by at least two of the administrators who rated the issues. Other issues rated high priority by at least two administrators were:

How efficient and effective is the staffing process?

Is too much or too little time spent in consultation activities as compared with other social work tasks?

Need to reduce duplication of services provided by human service agencies, by District 11 programs, and by school social workers.

Need for improved relationships with other resources in the community.

Need for support and assistance in balancing demands for consistency in administrative procedures with professional and pragmatic needs for versatility and flexibility to meet unique conditions at each building.

What is the effect of required paperwork and meetings on time available for direct services?

Some of the priorities can be addressed as part of a study of school social work outcomes. Other issues reflect statutory requirements which apply to all Special Education programs. While the effect of such requirements should be considered in examining school social work outcomes, the most useful information would come from a focus on measurable student changes which can be related to school social work activities.